

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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R 271125Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6949

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC HAWAII

USSAG NKP THAI

S E C R E T BANGKOK 15168

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS : PFOR, TH, CB

SUBJECT : ROUNDUP OF CURRENT THAI POLICY TOWARD THE GKR

REF: A. BANGKOK 11168

B. BANGKOK 13116

C. BANGKOK 14495

D. BANGKOK 13428

E. BANGKOK 13574

F. BANGKOK 12491

G. BANGKOK 12386

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUMMARY: THAI FOREIGN POLICY INTEREST IN CAMBODIA
REMAINS EXTREMELY HIGH. GKR SURVIVAL AND CONTINUED
USG SUPPORT TO CAMBODIA AFTER THE AUGUST 15 BOMBING
HALT HAS ALLEVIATED SOME OF THE WORST RTG FEARS, BUT
HAS NOT SIGNIFICANTLY CHANGED LONGER TERM RTG
EXPECTATIONS THAT THERE MAY EVENTUALLY BE A CHANGE OF
GOVERNMENT. THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS THAT THE RTG IS
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CONTEMPLATING A CHANGE IN POLICY THAT WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY
LESSEN ITS COMMITMENT TO THE GKR. THE THAI APPEAR,
HOWEVER, TO BE LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR RELATIONS WITH ANY
FUTURE GOVERNMENT OF CAMBODIA THAT IS NOT HOSTILE TO

THAILAND. END SUMMARY.

REAFFIRMATIONS OF THAI SUPPORT

1. RTG LEADERS HAVE BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY UNDERScoreD AND REAFFIRMED THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE GKR, AND HAVE INDICATED A CONTINUING INTEREST IN SEEING A SATISFACTORY OUTCOME TO THE CAMBODIAN WAR. ON THE PUBLIC RECORD, PRIME MINISTER THANOM KITTAKACHORN MENTIONED IN A JULY 18 PRESS CONFERENCE THAT ATHAILAND SUPPORTED CAMBODIA AND WAS MAKING RICE AVAILABLE, AND TRAINING GKR TROOPS (REF A). THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA) ISSUED A PRESS RELEASE AUGUST 21 REITERATING SUPPORT TO CAMBODIA

(REF B).

2. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE RTG HAS FOLLOWED THE SAME LINE IN PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS. THANOM STRESSED THE THAI AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CAMBODIA TO DEPUTY DEFENSE SECRETARY CLEMENTS ON 14 SEPTEMBER (PARA 9, REF C).

3. TRAINING OF KHMER TROOPS IN THAILAND REMAINS AT A LEVEL DEFINED PRINCIPALLY BY THE FUNDS AVAILABLE AND THE NUMBER OF TROOPS THE GKR CAN SPARE AT ANY ONE TIME. RTG WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE HELPING THE GKR IS NOT NOW, AND NEVER HAS BEEN, ONE OF THE LIMITING FACTORS.

4. REFS D AND E DESCRIBE THAILAND'S EFFORTS TO WIN ASEAN SUPPORT FOR THE GKR PRIOR TO THE ALGIERS NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE. WHILE NOTHING CAME OF THIS INITIATIVE, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE THAI ARE ACTIVE IN ORGANIZING ASEAN SUPPORT FOR THE GKR AT THE UNGA, AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE THIS PATTERN WHERE SUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES AND NEEDS PRESENT THEMSELVES.

5. THAILAND IS DISTRIBUTING RICE TO CAMBODIA IN LIMITED INCREMENTS TO AVOID THE LOCAL PRICE RISES THAT WOULD ACCOMPANY LARGE EXPORTS AND, ACCORDING TO SOME THAI, TO INSURE THAT, SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT FALL, A LARGE AMOUNT DOES NOT WIND UP
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IN UNFRIENDLY HANDS. THE LATTER REASON IS SHORTSIGHTED (IF INDEED IT IS A MAJOR FACTOR), BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE OBJECTIVE IS TO KEEP THE GKR ON TENTERHOOKS. THE RTG HAS TOLD US ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT IT WOULD NOT LET CAMBODIA STARVE, AND WE HAVE NO INDICATION THAT THE TECHNICAL PROBLEMS IT HAS ENCOUNTERED ON THIS SCORE INDICATE CAUTIOUS SUPPORT FOR THE GKR, OR ANY ATTEMPT TO KEEP POLICY OPTIONS OPEN REGARDING THE GOVERNMENT IN PHNOM PENH.

THAI ATTEMPTS TO KEEP A FLEXIBLE CAMBODIAN POLICY

6. AS REPORTED IN REFS A AND B, THE THAI HAVE, AT THE SAME TIME, STATED THAT THEY WILL DEAL WITH ANY LEGALLY CONSTITUTED CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT. THIS SEEMS TO BE AN EFFORT TO OPEN THE DOOR TO RELATIONS WITH SIHANOUK IF HE SHOULD RETURN TO POWER, AND

WOULD BE IN KEEPING WITH THE THAI DESIRE FOR A STABLE CAMBODIA, AS WELL AS TRANQUIL, MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. REF F MENTIONS AN MFA POSITION PAPER ALONG THESE SAME LINES.

7. DURING THE EARLY SEPTEMBER VISIT OF SIHANOUK'S RELATIVES TO BANGKOK ON THEIR WAY TO HONG KONG AND PEKING, DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER CHARCHAI CHUNHAWAN ENTERTAINED THEM AND THAILAND OFFERED ALL SUITABLE PROTECTION AND HOSPITALITY. A WELL PLACED MFA OFFICIAL MENTIONED TO US THAT THIS HOPITALITY EMANATED FROM THE COMMON COURTESY THAT ANY KINGDOM NORMALLY OFFERS TO FOREIGN ROYALTY. HE EMPHASIZED QUITE STRONGLY THAT SIHANOUK'S RELATIVES WERE, AFTER ALL, ROYAL. A TOP-LEVEL MFA OFFICIAL RECENTLY TOLD THE DCM THAT POLITICS WERET DISCUSSED DURING THE VISIT, BUT THAT, AT CHARCHAI'S DINNER, THE THAI SIDE REAFFIRMED THAILAND'S SUPPORT FOR THE GKR HEADED BY LON NOL. THE RTG TREATMENT, HOWEVER, DID SERVE THE ADDITIONAL PURPOSE OF BEING A FRIENDLY GESTURE TO SIHANOUK, SHOULD HE AT SOME POINT EMERGE AS THE LEADER OF A NEW CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT.

CONCLUSIONS

8. WE BELIEVE THAT THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP OF THAILAND IS EVEN MORE LIKELY THAN THE MFA TO WISH TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING THE LON NOL GOVERNMENT. DESPITE THE WISDOM OF MFA'S COUNSEL NOT TO RENEW ANY OLD ANTAGONISMS WITH SIHANOUK, THE FACT REMAINS THAT THERE WAS A LONG HISTORY OF BAD RELATIONS
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BETWEEN SIHANOUK AND MARSHAL SARIT, WITH WHOM THANOM AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAPHAT CHARUSATHIEN WERE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED. WE BELIEVE THAT, THOUGH THEY MAY BE PREPARED TO DEAL WITH SIHANOUK SHOULD HE RETURN, THE TIP RTG LEADERS WOULD VASTLY PREFER THAT HE NOT EFFECT A COME BACK. IN THE THAI VIEW, HIS RETURN WOULD BE PREFERABLE ONLY TO OUTRIGHT COMMUNIST CONTROL.

9. THE THAI NOW REALIZE THAT WE ARE CONTINUING TO GIVE AID OF VARIOUS TYPES TO THE GKR, AND THAT THE GKR, WHATEVER ITS WEAKNESSES, IS NOT IN DANGER OF EMMEDIATE COLLAPSE. THE THAI HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTED IN LON NOL'S PERFORMANCE, AND IN THE GENERAL FRAGILITY OF THE WORKING RELATIONS WITHIN THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL, AND HAVE THEREFORE HEDGED THEIR BETS SOMEWHAT. HOWEVER, THEY SEEM MORE ENCOURAGED NOW THAT THE GKR HAS NOT COLLAPSED, AS A RESULT OF BOTH OUR CONTINUED SUPPORT AND A BETTER PERFORMANCE RECENTLY ON THE PART OF THE KHMER.

10. INASMUCH AS THE THAI REALIZE THAT THE SURVIVAL OF THE GKR IS STILL INEXTRICABLY LINKED WITH THE SUPPORT IT RECEIVES FROM THE U.S., THE MOST IMPORTANT INGREDIENT IN THAILAND'S FORMULATION OF ITS CAMBODIA POLICY CONTINUES TO BE ITS ESTIMATION OF THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF THE ON-GOING U.S. COMMITMENT TO THE GKR, AND THE EXTENT OF U.S. CONFIDENCE IN IT. TO INSURE

THAT THE THAI MAINTAIN STRONG SUPPORT FOR LON NOL, IT IS ESSENTIAL
THAT WE KEEP THEM INFORMED WELL IN ADVANCE ON THE COURSES OF
ACTION WE ARE CONSIDERING AND, EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, ON THE
STATE OF ANY NEGOTIATIONS REGARDING POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE
CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT, SHOULD THAT SITUATION OCCUR.
MASTERS

SECRET

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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